The Influence of Arabic on Indian Language: Historically and Linguistically

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أثر اللغة العربية في اللغه الهندية: تاريخياً ولغوياً

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الملخص

من خلال تواصلنا المباشر مع العديد من الهنود أثناء الدراسة في الهند للفترة من 2007 حتى 2014، كنا مبهورين كثيراً بالمفردات التي بدت ذات اصل عربي، وعندما نسال عن المعنى نجدها فعلا عربية، كما استطعنا اكتشاف المزيد من الكلمات في البعض من افلام بوليوود الهندية التى شاهدناها، من الناحية التاريخية، استخدمت اللغة العربية فى الهند بصورة شبه حصرية من قبل سكانها المسلمين، وكانت العنصر الرئيسيي فى تحديد وبلورة هوية المسلمين الهنود، عموما، ليس من الغريب ان اللغة العربية هي لغة فى الغالب ذات طابع مقدس خارج الشرق الاوسط الناطق بالعربية، اقترحت دراسة شاملة لتاريخ الهند ان اول اتصال للهند باللغة العربية بدأ مع استيطان العرب المسلمين فى غرب الهند ومقاطعة السند، وفى وقت لاحق، أستمرت اللغة العربية بالازدهار تحت رعاية الحكام المغوليين فى الهند، خلال الحقب الاسلامية، استخدمت اللغة العربية بشكل معقد ولكن بعد استقلال الهند، اكتسبت اللغة العربية العادية زخما كبيرا، ومع ذلك، فان مظاهر اللغة فى شبه القارة كان له اهمية تاريخية كبيرة حيث خضعت للاستكشاف العلمي والمنهجي، وتحقيقا لهذه الغاية، تعرض هذه الورقة محاولة لتحليل مراحل ومدى تطور استخدامات اللغة العربية فى الهند منذ وصولها فى القرن الثامن ومرورا بالقرن العشرين مشيرةً الى افاق التطور التوظيفى للغة مع مرور الايام، وكذلك تسليط الضوء بشكل اساسي على الجانب الادبي للعربية الهندية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: اللغة العربية، العرب المسلمون، الاردو، العربية الهندية، تطور العربية، الحكام المغول.

Abstract

Having talked with many people from India when we studied there from 2007 till 2014, we were often fascinated by words that sounded Arabic in origin. When asking about the meaning, they were indeed Arabic. And I could detect more words in the few Hindi Bollywood movies that I have seen as well. Historically speaking, Arabic has been used in India almost exclusively by its Muslim population, and has been a key force in delineating and shaping Indian Muslim identity. This is not surprising, for it is generally acknowledged that the Arabic language has a predominantly sacred character outside the Arabic speaking Middle East. A thorough study of Indian history suggests that India's first substantial contact with the Arabic language came when the Arab Muslims settled in the western Indian province of Sind. Subsequently, the Arabic language continued to flourish further under the patronage of the Mughal rulers in India. In the Islamic epochs, the usage of Arabic was liturgical. But after the independence of India, non-sacred Arabic gained momentum. However, the functional manifestation of the language in the subcontinent has great historical significance and has not been systematically explored. To this end, this paper presents an attempt to analyze the processes and extent of development and uses of Arabic in India since its arrival in the eighth century through the twentieth indicating career prospects in the days to come, in as much as they bring into sharper focus the scriptural face of Indian Arabic.

Key words: Arabic language, Arab Muslims, Urdu, Indian Arabic, development of Arabic, Mughal rulers.

Introduction

INDIA has very old links with the Arab world. For hundreds of years starting in the 11th century, large parts of northern India were ruled by dynasties with roots in that part of the world; the language of the Mughal court was Persian, and so on. This is all well-known, as is the existence of many loan-words from Farsi, Arabic and Turkish in Hindi/Urdu, the lingua franca of much of northern India and Pakistan.

Hindi is full of words borrowed from Arabic and Farsi, like *kanun* (law, from the Arabic *qanuun*, itself borrowed from the Greco-Latin "canon"), *siyasai* or *siyasat* (politics), *akhbar* (newspaper; in Arabic, it means "news"); *jumuriyat*("democracy" in Urdu; in Arabic, a *jumhuriya* is a republic and the *jumhur* is the citizenry or polis); but these are "big" words, which I knew were borrowed in much the same way that an English-speaker knows that big words like "democracy" and "republic" are Greek or Latin in origin (Owens, 2000).

So it is still always a jolt to suddenly hear a word you recognise from everyday speech in the middle of a speech or monologue in a language you otherwise don't understand at all. Lately, I've been having this feeling as I watch coverage of the protests in Iraq. I've never thought about the etymology of the Hindi word *bas* (pronounced, roughly, like “bus”), which means something like “that's all”, or “enough”. I do, however, hear a lot of protestors using it in exactly the same way. It's intriguing to think that this, one of the most common words of everyday Hindi, might have come to us from Arab traders, soldiers or conquerors nearly a millennium ago. It seems likely; I cannot think of a Sanskrit root.

Our favourite discovery so far involves the two main agricultural seasons in South Asia; these are known as the *Kharif* (post-monsoon sowing, autumn harvest) and *Rabi* (winter sowing, spring harvest). These terms are constantly used in discussions about agriculture and the economy. Yet somehow, we had never asked ourselves their origin. Looking for the meaning of another word, we stumbled across a basic Arabic vocabulary list. And that is where we discovered that the Arabic words for autumn and spring are *khareef* and *rabee'*, respectively. Which, of course, makes perfect sense, now that we know.

It happens the other way around too. Once we were with an Iraqi friend who had recently completed her PhD study in Delhi. At one point, in the middle of a characteristically heated exchange with an auto-rickshaw driver over the condition of his meter, she turned to mend said “Is he speaking Arabic half the time? I feel like I understand every fifth word.”

A word should be added here about the sources for this study. In addition to synthesizing data from disparate multilingual secondary works such as those madrasas (religious schools) of India and bibliographies of Indian-Arabic texts, this paper stems from research conducted in varied primary source materials. Some of these original sources are Arabic books which are in the Central library at Jamia Millia Islamia in New Delhi.

Additionally, we have included findings meetings with Indian Muslim scholars of Arabic, and visits to madrasas, observation of Muslim nomenclature, and examination of Arabic vocabulary incorporation. With brief remarks pointing out the analogous or divergent uses of Arabic where relevant, the following pages present a detailed survey of the uses of Arabic in India.

A Historical Background of Arabic Language in India

The rise of Arabic Language to the status of a major world language is inextricably intertwined with the rise of Islam as a major world religion. The first acquaintance of the residents of the Indian subcontinent with the Arab people came about when Arab sailors first docked at Indian ports in order to acquire spices in pre- Islamic times, perhaps as far in the past as 50 CE. This early trade contact occurred two centuries before Arab was attested as a distinct language in the Arab Peninsula in the third century. Trade contacts persisted, and at some point in time, through Arab traders, Indians must have gained rudimentary acquaintance with the Arabic language.(Ahmad 1968).

Arab Muslims settled there, and with their colonization of Sind came India's first substantial and sustained contact with both the religion of Islam and the Arabic language. At this time, Indians began

to convert to Islam. The initial act required of any convert, the recitation of the Islamic creed of faith, *"la ilāhā ill" 'llāh, muhammad"" rasul" 'llāh"* (There is no god but God, Muhammad is the messenger of God), had an Arabic linguistic frame, which meant that Indian converts to Islam came into contact with Arabic through their very first religious experience. Non-sacred Arabic hegemony was promoted in many parts of the world by political, social, and economic factors. So much so, that in some of the lands conquered by the Arab Muslims, such as Coptic-speaking Egypt, Arabic almost entirely displaced and replaced the local languages(Rahman, 2014). In India, however, this did not happen, mainly because Arab Muslims did not have political control over more than the western provinces, and this control was for a limited time. The major Muslim dynasties in India were of Turkic origin, and their cultural language was, in the main, Persian. Other than the colony in Sind, Arab Muslim presence in India was constituted by small and early Arab trader settlements of mostly Yemeni and Basran descent on the Malabar coast, by limited contingents of Yemeni mercenary soldiers employed by various Muslim rulers, and by occasional Arab visitors. Thus, Arab Muslims never really had a major presence in India. The locals continued for the most part to use their own Indo-European and Dravidian languages, with Arabic playing a subsidiary (albeit religiously significant) linguistic role.Versteegh, 2001)

Currently, it is used almost solely by the 13.19 million Muslims who form 13.43 percent of the total 1.03 billion Indian population." Conversely, almost all Muslims in India appear to have some acquaintance with Arabic. From the early eighth century, Arabic in India has borne an Islamic identity, which has continued to be elaborated and strengthened through the thirteen centuries of its use under Muslim, Hindu, and British rule. The succeeding dynasties of Muslim rulers—including the Ghaznavids, Ghurids, slave-Sultans, Khaljis, Tughlaqs, and Lodis in and around Delhi, the Bahmanis and Adil-Shahis in the Deccan, the Shah-Mirs. In 1947, after India gained independence from British rule and was partitioned, Pakistan and later Bangladesh developed vis-à-vis Arabic in different directions—such as the proposals voiced in Pakistan by various political groups in the 1950s and 1970s that Arabic be adopted as the national language—which fall outside the scope of this article. In India, in the decades following Independence, Arabic usage was also modified in minor ways, but its Islamic identity was preserved and continues to be preserved today. Considering the future of Arabic usage in India, among the factors inhibiting it is the decline of Persian and Urdu and with it the decline of the Arabic-script reading populace.

One of the most common uses of Arabic in India is liturgical. This includes Qur'anic recitation, litanies *(tasbih),* prose prayers *(du'ä'),* formulaic expressions connected with the ritual prayer *{salah),* Süfl chants *(dhikr),* and the chanting of religious poetry *(qaslda, na't, munājāt,* and *marthiya).*

The recitation of the Arabic Qur'an is considered by Muslims a meritorious act and forms an important part of their religiosity. In India, Muslims recite the Qur'an avidly, but generally without understanding the literal meaning. Nevertheless, they still see it as an act that brings the reciter closer to God and wins him or her divine grace *(baraka)* and light *(nur).* Qur'anic recitation in India takes place in homes, masjids, madrasas, and other venues, at different times of the day or night, individually or communally, at religious and social gatherings or as part of a daily religious routine, throughout the year, but most especially during the month of Ramadan, audibly or inaudibly, in sophisticated and melodious recitation *(tartill* or *tajwid),* or in plain, elementary recital. Since a significant number speak Urdu (in 2003, roughly 25 million) or other Indian languages written in the Arabic script, they can, if they are literate—thus, roughly half of all Indian Muslims—de facto read and write the Arabic script. Since Qur'anic recitation in the original Arabic is an integral part of the mandatory ritual prayer *(salah),* those who can read and those who cannot all consider it a religious obligation to memorize suras. They most commonly learn by heart the shorter suras, including *al-fâtiha, al-nās, al-falaq, al-ikhläs, al-kawthar, al-nasr,* and *al-qadr*. They also recite *al-fâtiha* for the benefit of a deceased soul and upon visits to the shrine of a saint (Kaur, 1990;Rahman, 2000;and Rahman, 2014).

Teaching of Arabic as a Language of Religion

The religious need of Indian Muslims to learn Arabic gave rise over the centuries to a large number of religious schools catering only to Muslim students, called maktab and madrasa.(The terms are somewhat fluid, the word *madrasa* sometimes being used to denote a maktab; other terms used are *hifz-khāna* for Qur'an memorization schools, and *jāmi'a* or *dar al-'ulum* for higher education institutes. In premodem times, the term madrasa was also used for secular schools with both Muslim and Hindu students.). The curriculum followed in these madrasas through the centuries focused on Islam as a subject and Arabic as a tool. The method of teaching Arabic in these madrasas is grammar-centered and text-oriented. The focus is on reading and understanding classical Arabic texts. Speaking skills are not emphasized, but stylized prose writing skills *(inshā')* are given some attention(Desai, 1978). Generally, modern proficiency-based techniques are not used, although there is a slow move towards their utilization. Rote memorization is favored over analysis.). Theodore &Wright(1966) stated that the British colonial government in India de-emphasized religious madrasa education; they focused on the creation of institutions of secular learning which they claimed would make the world's academic and scientific progress accessible to the Muslims of India. Arabic in these institutions was initially somewhat marginalized and "orientalized, " both in terms of teaching method and modified curriculum. The change of direction was often administered by Muslim modernist reformers rather than directly by the British. Thus, three modem-style Muslim universities (which were open to non-Muslim students) came into being: Aligarh Muslim University, 30 the first Muslim institution of secular learning, was founded in 1875 in Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, by the reformist Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan; it attained the status of a university in 1921, and currently has two full departments of Islamic Studies, viz., Arabic studies and theology. The Jamia Millia Islamia has a more clearly Islamic bent, and aims to offer modem secular education simultaneously with religious education. It was founded in 1920 in Aligarh, and moved to Delhi in 1925. The Jamia Osmania University in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, was established in 1917 by the Nizam of Hyderabad; it has a department of Islamic studies in which Arabic is taught, and where research in Islamic studies (mostly Arabic-based) is encouraged. The issues related to the teaching of Arabic in these universities and in other institutions in India have been the subject of several conferences and monographs. Furthermore, the Arabic language is offered as an academic subject in a few non-denominational universities.

Arabic Religious Vocabulary Incorporated and Interjected into Indian Languages

Much of the Arabic vocabulary that has been incorporated into Indian languages over the centuries has to do with religion, moral values, and issues discussed extensively in the Qur'an. Heaviest absorption appears to be into languages used to a great extent by Muslims, in particular Urdu, The following sample Arabic terms have been simultaneously assimilated into four Indian languages, Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati, and Marathi: *din* (religion), *hajj* (the Hajj pilgrimage), *hājji* (one who has made the *hajj* pilgrimage), *imān* (belief), *jannat* (heaven), *jahannam* (hell), *haqlqat* (reality), *haqq* (right), *hikmat* (wisdom), *dunyā*(this world), *risāla* (message), *sālam* (greeting), *shaytān* (satán), *sadaqa* (alms), *zulm* (oppression), *'adālat* (justice), *ghusl* ([ritual] *hath), fasād* (corruption), *qabr* (grave), *qalam* (pen), *kafān* (shroud), *ladhdhat* (pleasure), *mātam* (mourning), *maqām* (station), *mawt* (death), *wafā'* (loyalty), *wājib* (mandatory), *wa'da* (promise), *yaqln* (certainty). Religious Arabic phrases are habitually interjected into Urdu (and other Indian-language) speech. These phrases usually contain an "Allah" component, such as *al-hamd" li'llāh* (praise be to God), *shukr*[aN] *li'llāh* (thanks be to God), *tnā sha' allāh* (what [wonders] God has willed!), *inshā' allāh* (if God wills), *and jazāk*[a]*'llāh* (may God reward you!). Additionally, the introductory parts of Muslim speeches and sermons are often in Arabic and may be brief, one-sentence openings or longer, multi-paragraph ones. These typically contain the name and praise of God *(basmala* and *hamdala)*, and benedictions on the Prophet *(tasliya);* Qur'an and Hadlth quotations are used heavily in religious communications, both written and oral, such as religion classes and the Friday sermon (Muhammad Ishaq, 1955; Seddiqui, 2002; Qutbuddin, 2007;and Haque, 2013).

Many Arabic words which have more general meanings in Middle Eastern Arabic take on a religious connotation in India. *Sahifa,* which can mean several things in Arabic, including a leaf in a notebook, a page, a newspaper, or a prayer book, signifies here the last sense only. *Ziyārat,* which means visit, connotes here a visit to the shrine of a saint. *Majlis,* which means sitting or assembly, indicates here a religious assembly. Other words of general meaning, in both Arabic and Indian languages, can denote a religious meaning in the latter. Similarly, the word *kitāb,* which means any book, often represents here a religious book, picking up on the designation of the Qur'an as The Book or *Kitāb.*

Impact of Arabic Language on Other Languages

The influence of Arabic on Muslims is well manifested in their languages and it left a tremendous influence on the languages and literatures of Muslim nations like Iran, Afghanistan and India etc. Persian is written in Arabic script, and more than 30 percent of vocabulary is of Arabic origin. Turkish before the reforms of the twenties was also written in Arabic. The Hausa language before the coming of the British colonialists was written in Arabic and the script is known as Ajami Script. The incidence of Arabic loan-words in Hausa language is very high. 'Ali Abu Bakr observed that one-fifth of currently used words in Hausa and Fulani are of Arabic origin. If one ventures into a Hausa–speaking community with an Arabic speaker using only Arabic; such a speaker has been found to establish quite a fair degree of communication with the people. Thus, Hausa words, *al-maksh* (scissors), *bindiga* (gun), *hakimi* (ruler), *alkalami* (pen) are of Arabic origin. The vocabulary of Yoruba, the language of the inhabitants of South Western Nigeria, is highly influenced by Arabic, the influence transcends religious usage, it includes every day and routine speech.(Khan, 2013)

Another feature of the significance of Arabic among Muslims is the establishment of Quranic Arabic Schools in every Muslim community to teach the Holy Quran, Arabic language and fundamentals of Islamic religion. The Ministry of Education of Northern Nigeria in 1958 puts the number of the Quranic Arabic Schools found in the area at the beginning of the 20th century at 20, 000 schools with approximately 250, 000 students. A considerable number of works have been written on the language in Arabic and other languages spoken by Muslims. This enthusiasm is summed up in the observation of Al-Thaalib I (d.1038 A.D.). He says, "When the Almighty ennobled and exalted the Arabic language, He elevated its rank and showed greater regard to it than any other language. He decreed for its fate guarding and treasuring a select people, the leaders of virtues and the luminaries of the earth who gave up lust and roamed the desert land in its service; who befriended the notebooks, the book case and inkstand for its acquisition, and who exerted themselves systemising its rules, and dedicated their life to immortalizing its books". In the present scenario, for the growth and promotion of Arabic language, we all have to make efforts in the right perspective and need to make a recourse to our pristine values, we should be the transmitters of knowledge, particularly that of Arabic language and Islam, from our progenitors to our progenies(Abdul, 2001).

Whatever the avenues are, here are other some words with the Arabic meaning, which the Hindi derives from, but may deviate somewhat from.

wāqt (time), admi (human being), insāan (human being), takriban (approximately, almost), leken (but), shaitan (devil, satan), mabhoom (hidden, unknown future event) shukriya (thank you, not an exact copy, "ya" is added), khabar (news item), ākhbar (plural of news), mohtaram (respected), sahib (companion, friend, used as Mister in Hindi), ādab (good manners), āynak (from eye (ain), means spectacles in Hindi), alam (universe), alim (scholar, scientist, learned person), āsali (original), qalām (pen), kursi (chair), ijazat (permission), qubul (agree), māshhoor (famous), khāss (special, distinct).(Retrieved from http://baheyeldin.com/linguistics/hindi-words-arabic-origin.html).

The rest of words are listed in a table at the end of this paper (See the appendix)

Future of Arabic in India

Arabic language will be part of the Indian mosaic since for a significant part of the Indian population (Muslims) it is the language of the religious (Islamic) scripture and carries with it religious approval and sanction. Arabic is the language of the Qur'an which is the central religious text of Islam and learning of Qur'an is necessary for practicing correct rituals of Islam. So, at least liturgical use of Arabic language such as recitation of Qur'an, litanies (tasbih), ritual prayer (salah) and such will lead to learning the language. The religious need of Indian Muslims to learn the Arabic language will continue to lead to the establishment, maintenance and running of madrasas and Islamic seminaries in India. So, the religious need of Indian Muslims to learn the Arabic language will remain one of the greatest factors for the development of the language in India in the future also.

As far as the prospects of the non-sacred usage of Arabic language is concerned, it has a great future ahead as we see in modern times in economic activities around the world: it is one of the significant languages in the world for business, technology and labour market. There are more than 20 countries where Arabic is an official language. It is one of the six official languages of the United Nations. The Arabic language gained more importance after the economic boom of the oil producing Arab countries in the global market. Furthermore, after the economic globalization, the importance of Arabic language has increased manifold opening up of many employment opportunities. It was bolstered further by the opening up of the Indian market to the global business. There are many scopes for Arabic learners in both private and government sectors. The government sector may include, but is not limited to, Foreign Service, embassies, cultural attaches' and diplomatic services, intelligence, tourism and so on. The private sector may include jobs in international organizations, mass communication, publishing, entertainment, education, interpretation and translation, business and industry, finance and banking and such others.

Conclusion

Much of the Arabic vocabulary that has been incorporated into Indian languages over the centuries has to do with religion, moral values, and issues discussed extensively in the Quran. Heaviest absorption appears to be into languages used to a great extent by Muslims in particular Urdu. In India, during Mughal period, Persian was very dominant language and all the official correspondence was done in Persian, as a result of which the integration of Arabic into Indian languages took place primarily through its mediation—thus Arabic vocabulary that had earlier been absorbed into Persian came into Indian languages as Arabo-Persian words. Arabic language has pervaded into almost all the fields of academics. A large number of libraries in India house Arabic works by Indian and Middle Eastern scholars, including thousands of manuscripts, some very valuable. Some of the libraries in North India are the Raza Library of Rampur, Maulana Azad Library of AMU, Aligarh, Kutubkhana-i Nasiriyya in Lucknow etc.

In brief, Arabic language had reached India in the seventh century as a sacred language of the religion of Islam which was mainly studied and used by Muslims only. Previously, the usage of Arabic was liturgical. But after the independence of India, more precisely, after liberalization of the Indian economy, non-sacred usage of Arabic gained momentum. So, the Indian Government paid considerable attention towards the study and research of Arabic language by including it in the universities as a foreign language. By the inception of 21st century, the demand of Arabic language has increased manifold augmenting career prospects in various fields in the days to come.

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Appendix A

Arabic Words in Indian Language

1.	Ajab	wonder, strange occurrence
2.	Ajib	strange, derived from above root
3.	Ajaib	plural of ajab, same root. Punjabi/Sikh name
4.	Kherab	Destruction
5.	Ashiq	Lover
6.	Ishq	deep love, extreme passion
7.	Jenat	Heavens
8.	Mushkil	Problem
9.	Chai	Tea
10.	Magbour	Obligation
11.	Shakwa	Complain
12.	Qahwa	Coffee
13.	Inteqam	Revenge
14.	Aql	mind, intellect
15.	Mahabat	likeness
16.	Jasus	spy
17.	Rashwa	Corruption
18.	Yaqin	Certain
19.	Nazer/ Nadher	sight
20.	Intezar/ Intedhar	Waiting for
21.	Kitab	Book
22.	Reza/Redha	Complacence
23.	Nasib	Fate
24.	Damag	intellect in Hindi, though the Arabic word could mean "head", "skull", and "brain" as well
25.	Ya3ni	which means, meaning, also a "conversation filler"
26.	Azam	great
27.	Azmat	greatness, derived from above root
28.	Bilkol	"all of it", derives from
29.	Hal	condition, state
30.	Marhoom	is often used when referring to people who have passed on not unlike allah yarhamuh
31.	Matlab	concern, meaning
32.	Qalam	Pen, Pencil
33.	Hayat	life
34.	Kursi	Chair
35.	Ijazat	Permission
36.	Silsila	chain, Hindi = series of events
37.	Asali	Original
38.	Aziz	Dear
39.	Kalam	speech, especially the words of a poet
40.	Dunya	World, life